

The University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

DC 3209G – Social Media and Organizations
Winter 2021



Instructor Information

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Facebook Group: Digital Communication: Western Social Media

Course Information

Lectures: Thursdays 9:30 – 12:30 pm; Zoom class online

This online course provides hands-on experience with building, evaluating, and using social media tools such as blogs, wikis, and social networking websites within an organizational context. Relevant issues such as user privacy, social media policies, effective planning and implementation, and organizational impact will be addressed. Emphasis will be on the professional and applied applications of this topic.

Antirequisite(s): MIT 3373F/G. Extra Information: 3 lecture hours

Course Syllabus:

1. Course Description: This online course provides hands-on experience with building, evaluating, and using social media tools such as blogs, wikis, and social networking websites within an organizational context. Relevant issues such as user privacy, social media policies,

effective planning and implementation, and organizational impact will be addressed. Emphasis will be on the professional and applied applications of this topic.

2. Detailed Weekly Description

“The slogan ‘You are what you share’ (Charles Leadbeater) expresses the transformation of the autonomous unit of the self into an outgoing entity that is constantly reproducing its social capital through the transmission of value (data) to others. Let’s face it: we refuse to perceive ourselves as ‘slaves of the machine.’ What does it mean when we all agree that there is an addictive element to today’s social media use, yet none of us is apparently addicted? Are we really returning only sporadically? What exactly is being captured here? If anything, we’re encapsulated by the social sphere as such, not by the software, nor by the protocols, network architectures, or the assuredly infantile interfaces.” ~ Geert Lovink, “On the social media ideology,” p. 4.

Social media is at the forefront of the news these days—as much for its meteoric rise and takeover of human attention as for its influence on contemporary politics. As social media become more deeply ingrained in our personal and organizational practices, the tension between social media as liberator and social media as jailer is a relationship we all need to address in our lives. This course will give you tools to use social media critically and intelligently as you explore the new public sphere the platformization of the Web (as Anne Helmond calls it) has fostered. Using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Quora, Search Engine Optimization, and Google Analytics, you will interrogate emergent issues arising from corporate ideologies, user-generated content, information access, technology, mobile media, and politics. Examining the paradox of social media as a global stage for social justice activism and totalitarian takeovers, you will learn how to apply the powers of user-generated content and search engine optimization for all kinds of people and organizations.

“The Affordances” of social media, according to Jeffrey Treem and Paul Leonardi, are “Visibility, Editability, Persistence, and Association” (p. 143), and these attributes alter socialization (including how groups assemble and organize), storytelling, information sharing, information contagion, content moderation, and power structures, especially in organizations. By the time you have finished this course, you will have an inside understanding of these issues and how to navigate them. You will be a respected member of the *Quora* community (aware of how to promote yourself), and will add your successful completion of the Google Analytics Individual Qualifications Certification Test to your Resumé. On top of that, you will have opportunities to explore hashtag activism, and the effects of social media on real world ideological and socio-political issues of your choice. The future belongs to those who moderate content and control platforms, and this course will leave you with the knowledge you need to be an informed user of social tools in our complex and rapidly changing world.

References and recommended further reading:

Lovink, Geert (2016). “On the social media ideology”, *e-flux* (Journal #75):

http://worker01.e-flux.com/pdf/article_9008964.pdf

Helmond, Ann (2015). “The Platformization of the Web.” *Social Media + Society*. (July-Dec): 1–11.

McNamee, Roger (2018). “How to Fix Facebook Before It Fixes Us.” *Washington Monthly*.
<https://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/january-february-march-2018/how-to-fix-facebook-before-it-fixes-us/>

Mod, Craig (2017). “How I Got My Attention Back.” *Wired Magazine*.

https://www.wired.com/2017/01/how-i-got-my-attention-back/?mbid=social_fb

Treem, J.W. & Leonardi, P.M. (2012). Social Media Use in Organizations: Exploring the Affordances of Visibility, Editability, Persistence, and Association. *Communication Yearbook*, 36, 143-189.

Schedule (Week by Week):

Jan 14: Week 1 – Introduction: “You are what you share.”

Introduction to *Quora*: Stoking the Content Furnace & Google Search Engine Certification Test

Readings (please read before our first class):

Lovink, Geert (2016). "On the social media ideology", *e-flux* (Journal #75):

http://worker01.e-flux.com/pdf/article_9008964.pdf

D'Urso, Joey (2020): "How the coronavirus pandemic is changing social media". *RISJ Review*:

[https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/risj-review/how-coronavirus-pandemic-changing-social-](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/risj-review/how-coronavirus-pandemic-changing-social-media)

[media](#)

Jan 21: Week 2: Propaganda, Pandemics, and the Rise of Big Data

Readings: Molter, Vanessa and Renee DiResta (2020), "Pandemics & propaganda: how Chinese state media creates and propagates CCP coronavirus narratives." *The Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review*, Vol. 1.

Jan 28: Week 3: The Structure of Information: From Filter Bubbles to Racial Biases to User Surveillance

Watch online: Eli Pariser, "Beware Online Filter Bubbles", TED:

https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles

Watch on Netflix: *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*

Readings: Noble, Safiya Umoja (2018). "Chapter 1: A Culture, Searching", *Algorithms of Oppression*, pp. 15-30.

Damini, Jesse (2019). "Black Mirror: Bandersnatch Could Become Netflix's Secret

Marketing Weapon"

<https://bit.ly/2C2Q8hU>

Feb 04: Week 4: Who's Watching the Watchers?

Readings: Noble, Safiya Umoja (2018). "Chapter 1: A Culture, Searching," pp. 34-63

Gillespie, Tarleton. "Content Moderation is Not a Panacea: Logan Paul, YouTube, and what we should expect from platforms," *Social Media Collective*: <https://tinyurl.com/yc6s9te5>

Feb 11: Week 5: The Dark Side of Social Media

Timed Test on Reading: Vaidhyanathan, Siva. "The Attention Machine" from *Anti-Social Media*, pp. 77-105 (see Resources on Owl to download article well in advance of test).

Spring Reading Week: Feb 13 to 21 – No Class

Feb 25: Week 6: SEO, Twitter & Four Social Media Logics

Reading: Burgess & Baym, *Twitter: A Biography*, pp. 1-79.

Mar 04: Week 7: China & The World: Labour and Social Media

Reading: Jack Linchun Qiu (2018). Labor and social media: the exploitation and emancipation of (almost) everyone online. In J. Burgess, A. Marwick & T. Poell. *The Sage handbook of social media* pp. 297-313.

Google Analytics IQ Due (March 04). Be sure to complete the SEO readings: by Moz & Google

Mar 11: Week 8: Social Media and Protest

Reading: Gehl, Robert (2015). "The case for Alternative Social Media." *Social Media + Society*, (July-December 2015): pp. 1-12.

Poell, Thomas & José van Dijck (2018). "Social Media and new protest movements." *The Sage Handbook of Social Media*, pp. 546-561.

March 18: Week 9: From Pandemic to Infodemic

Reading: Ball, Philip and Amy Maxmen (27 May 2020): “The epic battle against coronavirus misinformation and conspiracy theories”: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01452-z>

Peer Review For Quora Assignment (due March 25th) – Bring your rough draft to this class

March 25: Week 10: Gaming the System: Optimizing, Pitching, Branding, Growing A Following

Reading: Serazio, Michael and Brooke Erin Duffy, “Social Media Marketing” *The Sage Handbook of Social Media*: https://www.academia.edu/30852925/Social_Media_Marketing

Time for groups to work on presentations

April 01: Week 11: Crisis Mapping and Social Media Activism

Reading: Gilbert-Knight, Ariel (2013). “Social media, crisis mapping and the new frontier in disaster response”, *The Guardian Online*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/oct/08/social-media-microtasking-disaster-response>

Assignment #4: Group Blog Presentations Due (10 minutes per group).

April 08: Week 12: Gamocracy: Social Media and Democracy

Reading: Das, Ronnie and Wasim Ahmed (2020) “Despite concerns, COVID-19 shows how social media has become an essential tool in the democratisation of knowledge”:

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2020/06/05/despite-concerns-covid-19-shows-how-social-media-has-become-an-essential-tool-in-the-democratisation-of-knowledge/>

Assignment #4: Group Blog Presentations Due (10 minutes per group).

Exam: Date TBA. Short answer and an essay question to be written at home. 3 hours.

Course Materials

- Burgess, Jean and Nancy Baym. *Twitter: A Biography*. New York University Press, 2020. Paper copies are available in the Western bookstore or digital copies from: <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/twitter-jean-burgess-nancy-k-baym-v9781479823833?term=9781479823833>
- Clemens, James. *Google Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide*. **Free Online:** <https://www.webpageone.co.uk/pdf/Google-search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf>
- Moz. *Beginner’s Guide to SEO*. Moz.com. No date. **Free PDF for download:** <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>
- Noble, Safiya Umoja. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York UP, 2018. Paper copies available in the Western bookstore or digital copies from: <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/algorithms-of-oppression-safiya-umoja-noble-v9781479866762?term=9781479866762>

Course Media/Technology:

Classes will be held on Zoom during our 3-hour time slot. Students should access the class via a laptop or tablet and be sure to bring a pen, notebook or paper. Your cameras should be turned on during class. You will need access to the Web to do course readings, assignments, and to submit work as well. You should set up a **Twitter account** and join our class **Facebook Group** (Digital Communication: Western Social Media). Students are expected to use this technology in directed ways for course-related activities only.

Methods of Evaluation:**Assignment #1: Timed test on how Social Media captures our attention. (February 11th, 3 hours, 20%)**

Test will consist of an essay question on our reading: Siva Vaidhyanathan's "The Attention Machine" (see Owl Resources to download the article). You should compare and contrast this chapter to the other readings we have completed on the course up to that point (this includes articles by Lovink, D'Urso, Molter and DiResta, Noble, Damini, Gillespie and/or Pariser's TED talk). Test is open book. Your answer should *exceed* 1,000 words. Upload your answer to the appropriate Assignments dropbox on Owl.

Assignment #2: Google Analytics Individual Qualification Certification Test (March 04; 10%)

In order to master the web and social media, you must understand the currents that drive it. Search engines determine what information people can find and what topics you should be promoting. The Google Analytics Individual Qualification (IQ) is a demonstration of proficiency in Google Analytics that is available to any individual who has passed the Google Analytics assessment. Qualified users will be proficient at leveraging Google Analytics within their organizations and at helping others to do the same. You earn the certification through the Academy for Ads, Google's online training program.

If you don't have an Academy for Ads account, you need one to access the AdWords assessments that are required to become certified. Find out how to set up your Academy for Ads account here: <https://support.google.com/academyforads/answer/6373376>

(You can use your Google ID.) Read the *Google Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide*. Next take the four free courses offered by Google Analytics Academy in preparation for earning the **Google Analytics IQ Certification Test**. Allow a minimum of six hours of study to prepare for the Test. You need to get at least 56/70 questions correct for a passing grade of 80%.

The **Google Analytics Academy preparatory courses** are:

1. Google Analytics for Beginners
2. Advanced Google Analytics
3. Google Analytics for Power Users
4. Getting Started with Google Analytics 360

Each course has built in assessments, which you will need to get 80% on to achieve a certificate of completion. You will find the courses here: <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/>

If you want to do more advanced study, read Avinash Kaushik at: <https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/>

Once you have finished the videos, taken notes and read through/completed all the practice problems, go back to the Google Partner center and fire up the test. It will open up a browser that doesn't let you escape, so for your practice run make sure to open up a second browser, and include the following 5 tabs: Analytics Help Center, Google Analytics Academy, your Actual Google Analytics Account, and Google itself. Once you start, you won't be able to mark a question and/or to go back and check your answer. This is strong incentive to familiarize yourself with the Analytics Help Center. Most of the answers can be found there. Once you start the test, you can't pause, go back, or mark questions.

The test takes an hour and a half. It should take you the whole time. If you fail, and you are likely to the first time, you'll have to **wait 7 days** before taking it again. You will need to complete this certification before our class in Week 9 when we will be discussing the material at length in class, so you should start early. Submit a screenshot of your grade along with your certificate as a single PDF. The certification is valid for 18 months, and you get a new logo and line on your resume when you complete it.

Assignment #3: A Quora Answer and Peer Review (Draft due for Peer Review: March 18)

(Post final version to Quora, and submit a copy of it along with the peer reviews you have done and the peer reviews done on your Answer. Submit them as a single PDF to the Assignments dropbox on Owl: March 25: 15%)

Quora is an often overlooked social media site, but its low profile does not mean it is unimportant. *Quora* is a Q&A site with unique properties for networking. It is one of those rare places where the biggest names in the social media business rub shoulders with newbies. *Quora's* moderators are well-connected, and have established relationships with many top digital publishers like *TIME* and *Huffington Post*. Every week, the moderators take the best answers to people's questions and pitch them to these top-shelf publications. The editors review the pitches and republish them as blogs on their own sites. Great content shoots to the top and they leave all of your links intact. This offers a rare opportunity to circulate your product or brand or raise your own website's profile by optimizing your content on Search Engines. It can also be a great site for mentorship where major thinkers can engage with your ideas. For the sake of your career, you'll probably want to get in the habit of answering two or three questions a week, but, for this class assignment, you will only answer one question over the space of the first month of the course: (bring two copies of your rough draft to workshop in class on March 18th, and post the revised, final version to Quora within one week ~ by March 25th at the latest. **(Any assignments posted LATE on Quora will NOT be graded).**)

You will workshop your question with '**peer reviewers**' (two of your classmates) who will help you to revise, expand, and polish your answer before you post it to Quora. Once one of Quora's editors picks up your answer, you now have a resource within Quora to whom you can pitch ideas. Think of them as your "agent". You can now email them every week or so, and let them know which publications you think your answers might work best for. Don't be shy about this. You are helping them filter content and are making it easier for them to find work to publish. If they can't help you, they'll let you know, and then choose another "agent".

Pick a good question. Your answer should be a minimum of *500 words long, plus citations*. The question you choose should be suitably complex, specific [i.e. talk about Instagram, not social media in general terms, for example], and your answers rigorous, researched, and supported by evidence. Here are some appropriate sample questions as a guide:

- "Has Twitter [or Facebook or something else] reinvented social activism?"
- "Is Facebook making us anti-social?"
- "What is the most powerful Instagram marketing strategy?"
- "How has the coronavirus pandemic changed Twitter and its users?"
- "How has amateur content produced by subject matter experts (SMEs) on YouTube changed the entertainment industry?"

Search on *Quora* for original questions to answer (and make sure that the question is well written. You may need to edit it). Try to pick a question that hasn't been answered by too many people. Originality in asking will help your grade. Your question is due to be posted on *Quora* one week after the peer review date. Post your response and your peer review materials (2 of your answer by your classmates and 2 reviews of classmates' answers). **Upload the Quora link to your blog (don't forget to include your peer-reviewers' names)** and, as your answer circulates, explain what success you have had spreading your ideas. You may continue to add to this all term. The instructor will open a window in the Assignments box for you to upload a copy of your material (a copy of your Quora submission, 2 peer reviewers' comments, 2 peer reviews you completed for classmates) and the Quora link. Late assignments receive a zero.

Assignment #4: Group Research Project: Social Media & Activism Presentation (10 minutes max April 1st and 8th; 25%)

In pairs, students will research and explore a social media app, platform, or social media-driven movement in an activist, protest, or ethically-minded context to be presented to class with supplemental materials—including a slideshow—posted to a group blog. Your inquiry should be *three pronged*:

- discuss social media, and ...
- an issue, a technology, a platform, or an app, and ...
- a company, a government, a political movement, a location, or an event.
- See the examples (below) as a guide for designing a complex topic to explore.

Your group will research the issues that arise *in the context of social media* for your chosen topic. Do not generalize. Identify a specific topic in a specific situation. You will report your findings as a presentation supported by a blog (with a minimum of four posts) that reflect course materials and your participation in class. You can use WordPress or Blogger or Wix or Weebly or another free site. (Tumblr is a microblogging site and so not recommended for this assignment.) These blog posts can be written collaboratively or you may each write two and then revise or add to each other's posts. Include your slides, citations, links, multimedia to support your presentation and your argument, and demonstrate the depth of your research. Your presentation will give you the opportunity to discuss your findings. You should not read your blogs to us, but give us an overview of what you presented there. On Zoom it usually works best if you prerecord your presentation and can simply upload a link during class. **(4 blog posts with a minimum of 400 words each; Due on the day of your Zoom presentation: April 1st or April 8th).**

Possible Topics could include the role of social media in:

The Infodemic and Coronavirus Apps (be specific)
 Coronavirus Contact Tracing and Native Americans
 United Nations' MigrantApp for migrants from South and Central America to North America
 Boycott and the Ethical Food Movement
 Astroturfing, a particular drug, and a Pharmaceutical Company
 Sustainable agro-food
 Fashion and the Environment
 Greenpeace and Shell Oil (see their Lego Ad)
 An extreme weather event (like Typhoon Pablo and Crowdfunder in the Philippines)
 The Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong
 Micromappers/Crisis Mappers and Relief Organizations
 Zooniverse and micro-tasks (like Galaxy Zoo 2 to crowdsource galaxies)
 A Mobile Health App for a particular disease, condition or demographic (Alzheimer's app or caregiver apps or colour blindness apps)
 A particular kind of Digital Addiction
 Fitness and Quantifying the Self
 Tactical Media at a particular place and time
 Political Resistance (Resistbot, for instance: <https://resistbot.news/where-is-the-resistance-3f04be9e0f1c>)
 The Transborder Immigrant Tool (App) and Mexican Migrants
 Prodrug and ...
 The Arab Spring and ...
 Occupy Wall Street (and Twitter censorship, for instance)
 Ferguson and Media Tweetstorms
 Shanzhai Innovation in Shenzhen, China
 Amnesty International's Panic Button App
 I Am Alive App (off grid for warzones)
 Crowdfunder and youth groups

Encryption Apps/Platforms/Open Whisper Systems for Activists (like Pidgin or Adium or PixelKnot or

Signal or Red Phone or Text Secure)

InformaCam or Bambuser and Livestreaming

AndroidLost as protection for Social Protest Data

Waze Social App and Kettling in U.K. protests

Seafood Watch app and clean restaurants

Fooducate App

Locavore App and Healthy Eating

EPA Air Now and Carbon Limits/Emissions

ClimateCounts App and A Corporate Offender

Zimride App and ridesharing

Toxic Baby App and Infant Health/Environmental Pollution

Dirty Dozen App and Pesticide Use

Carbon Emissions or Carbon Footprint Initiatives

Countable App and Congressional Votes

Politifact App and Truth in Government

Polltracker and Push Notifications

Dollarocracy and political contributions

Sitegeist and Neighbourhood Demographics

Open States and Legislative Activity

Big Data and ...?

Black Lives Matter and ...?

Fake social media news and some aspect of elections (chose a country. Be specific.)

Donald Trump, Christine Blasey Ford, and #WhyIDidn'tReport

Social Media and fires in Australia, Brazil or California

Assignment #5: Weekly Participation and Mandatory Peer Review (10%).

Each Zoom class will involve discussion questions in breakout rooms, Tweetjams, and other activities. These are not optional events and will help deepen your understanding of the course material. Be sure to come to class with searching questions about the readings. Students are expected to enroll in the **Facebook Group, Digital Communication: Western Social Media**. Any absences should be rare and excused absences (eg. for your out-of-town varsity sporting events or for medical reasons). More than three unexcused absences without a doctor's or coach's note could result in being debarred from writing the final exam (see below).

Exam: Timed exam will consist of short answers, and an essay question to be written at home. **Date TBA (3 hours; 20%)**

Attendance

Examinations/Attendance

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

1. A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
2. Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The

Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of Registration.

Late work: Except where specified elsewhere, late work will be assessed a penalty of 2% per day.

Please note: Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a first semester course is March 12th, 2021. Students can find details about this academic policy here: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf. Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2021

Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments, including take-home exams, in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment

for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate or equivalent documentation, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

In the event of a Covid-19 resurgence, it is possible that different procedures may need to be put in place on short notice.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

SUPPORT SERVICES - LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Mental Health Support:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Accessible Education:

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Accessibility Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support Centre:

<http://writing.uwo.ca/>

Learning Skills Services:

<https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>

Academic Learning and Support for Online Learning:

<https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/types/academic-and-learning-support.html>

Indigenous Services:

<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

Western International:

<https://international.uwo.ca/>

Career Centre:

<http://careerexperience.uwo.ca/>

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.